



Instagram Best Practices & Tips

Why Instagram?

Instagram at its core, is a platform for visual storytelling—for consumers and businesses alike. Instagram is where the world captures and shares its moments through imagery. As you explore Instagram, think about how you can use authentic photos and videos to help your business tell a visually compelling story. The department's handle will be used to connect with potential patients, faculty, trainees and others interested in plastic and reconstructive surgery through the use of imagery and videos.

Below we have our best practices and tips broken into three pieces, being: Build, Monitor and Engage.



Building: Building Your Profile





- Building your profile: As the point of entry for your audience, every element of your profile—your @username, photo, bio and links—should reflect the Johns Hopkins Medicine brand identity and personality. Framed below are details about how to put your best face forward on your Instagram Profile.
 - **Visuals.** Your profile image should visually represent the Johns Hopkins Medicine brand.
 - **Profile Image (400 x 400 pixels):** To ensure consistent branding across all social channels, the profile photo will depend on the account. All Johns Hopkins entities will utilize the blue Johns Hopkins Medicine logo with the entity name underneath, and all departments will have the Johns Hopkins Medicine dome logo with a color from the secondary color palette. You can find the [secondary color palette](#) here, and can look at our [branding guidelines](#) for examples of these different images.
 - **Bio.** Your Instagram bio is the modern business card. In 150 characters, it’s important that it include your name, since this is how people on Instagram will know you. Your Instagram bio should display the name of your department.
 - A good bio will:
 - **Accurately explain who you are and what you do.** Think about what sets you apart from your competitors, and describe this part of your brand.
 - **Target ideal followers.** Use specific words that describe someone in your target audience. Although keywords in Instagram bios aren’t searchable, viewers will immediately know that yours is a relevant account to follow.
 - **Link.** Unlike other social networks, Instagram is strict on where clickable links can be placed. Currently, you can only put a live link in your bio and/or in your Instagram stories. You can put a link in the Instagram feed, but it will not be “clickable” due to the nature of the platform.

Monitor & Building Your Community



- Commit to about 10 minutes, three times a day to ensure you are in tune with the content and conversations being created by your target audience. You will best position itself to reach their audience by using the following listening tactics:
 - **Start following:** Follow, but not too fast and not at a rate that exceeds your follows. Do a search for experts in the field who are also on Instagram.
 - This is one way to let relevant people know you are on Instagram.
 - If possible, try to make sure to follow back relevant people and companies that are following you, unless it is an obvious spam account.
 - You can also follow hashtags of interest and content that uses the hashtag will appear in your newsfeed.
 - **Hashtags:** These tags are used to affiliate a post with a certain topic and can be useful for tracking social marketing campaigns and connecting with your target audience.
 - Follow relevant hashtags to stay up to date on what people are posting in your field. You can follow hashtags by clicking on the search icon and typing in keywords under the “tags” column. Once you follow a hashtag, images that utilize it will appear in your newsfeed.
 - Record trending hashtags and terms used amongst your target audience and repurpose them to bridge conversation with relevant posts.

Engage



- **Use an accessible and authentic tone:** It’s not just what you say, it’s how you say it. Your audience will find you more relatable if your posts are authentic, conversational and responsive to their questions or current events. Stay away from marketing-speak. Write captions that are intriguing and newsworthy and that solicit feedback.
- **Quality over quantity:** It’s smart to try to post twice a week and during optimal times. Test to see what works best for you! If you don’t have quality content, don’t post. Instagram is all about visuals and it is better to post less often with quality content. We recommend testing out posting at different times in the morning, afternoon, evening and different days of the week to see when your followers are most engaged.

- **Tell great stories:** Instagram gives you the unique chance to tell great stories through visual content by posting to your “feed” or posting content as an Instagram Story or Reel. Instagram videos are highly effective at telling your brand’s story within 60 seconds. Storytelling is an amazing way to market your brand and create engaging images or videos.
- **Instagram Stories:** Stories will appear on your account for 24 hours at the top of your followers newsfeeds in the Stories section. Instagram stories features include:
 - Text can be added to your image to reveal updates
 - Links can also be added to Instagram Stories
 - The ideal size image for Instagram stories is 1080 by 1920 pixel
 - Knowing Instagram stories go away after 24 hours, they can be added to the highlight reel to stay on your page longer than a 24 hour period.
- **Instagram Reels:** Reels are short vertical video clips that showcase 15- 60 second videos. Like Instagram Story, these videos are virtual; however, they stay on your profile instead of going away after 24 hours.
 - In addition to seeing reels from people you follow; you will also see reels from people you may be interested in.
- **Be consistent:** Focus on producing quality creative: keep the message simple and give them something they’ll remember. The best way to organically build your followers is by posting consistently.
- **Showcase the experience, not the product:** It’s not that your audience doesn’t care about the product, they do. But we want to be able to show them how they can integrate brands into their lives and build relationships with them. I.e. Instead of posting a photo of a new piece of equipment, post an image showing staff utilizing new equipment and discuss how it will impact the patients.
- **Experiment:** Post different content, at different times, tag different people in your posts, etc. Then when you find out what’s successful, build on it. Social media is always changing, so it’s important to know what resonates with your audience and what they care about.
- **Be of value:** Social media isn’t just about YOU or your brand. It is about your audience, provide them with valuable content. Before you post something, ask yourself what does your audience get out of this post? Are you providing them insight and/or teaching them something new?
- **Use ‘We’ instead of ‘I’:** after all, you are speaking on behalf of the brand.
- **Stay relevant:** Instagram has updated their algorithm, so your followers might be seeing content the day after you post it. For example, if you are posting about an upcoming event, we’d recommend you share that a few days prior to the event so your audience will see it in time. This could include making sure if you are posting about an upcoming event to post about it a couple of days prior to make sure your audience will see it in time.
- **Respond and Engage:** It’s important that you respond and/or like all comments on your posts to strengthen that relationship you have with your audience. We also recommend commenting on other accounts within your network to grow your account following and make people aware of your presence on the platform.

Other Resources

- [JHM Social Media Guidelines](#)
- [How to Respond to Negative Comments](#)—Written by Reed Smith of the Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media

- [Instagram for Business blog](#)
- [Harness the Power of Social Media](#) – Written in the Johns Hopkins Insights